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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Announces Multi-State Agreement with Craigslist

(Phoenix, Ariz. – November 6, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced a multi-state agreement with Craigslist to crack down on inappropriate content, including solicitations for child prostitution, in the “erotic services” section of its online classified ad Web site. Forty-two other state Attorneys General and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) joined in the agreement.

Under the agreement, Craigslist will require that posters of erotic services ads give a working phone number and pay a fee with a valid credit card. This change should significantly reduce the number of erotic services posts for illegal activity as well as provide law enforcement with needed information to prosecute violators.

Craigslist will also deploy search technology that it developed to assist the NCMEC and law enforcement agencies identify missing persons, children and victims of human trafficking. It will also explore technology to block inappropriate image uploads and better filter for code words and euphemisms for illegal activity.

The company will provide any relevant information in response to law enforcement subpoenas. It plans to donate all proceeds from the erotic services ads to charity.

“I am pleased that Craigslist has agreed to join the effort to combat the exploitation of minors,” Goddard said. “Internet technology provides groundbreaking opportunities for education and commerce. We must, however, continue to work vigilantly to eliminate its use for prostitution, human trafficking and other criminal activity.”

Craigslist has also committed to initiate litigation with 14 software and Internet companies that provide services to circumvent the Web site’s defenses against inappropriate content and illegal activity. Craigslist will provide the Attorneys General with information about those businesses for possible litigation or criminal prosecution.

“The criminals engaged in the sexual trafficking of children no longer parade them on the streets of America’s cities. Today, they market them via the Internet, enabling customers to shop for a child from the privacy of their own homes or hotel rooms,” said Ernie Allen, President and Chief Executive Officer of NCMEC.

According to the agreement, Craigslist agreed to take additional steps to crack down on erotic services ad content, including:

- Attaching “tags” to the erotic services section that assist parental screening software.
- Employing “digital tagging” to identify and eliminate inappropriate content. With tagging technology, users flag ads that violate Craigslist’s terms of service, which include prohibitions on pornography and criminal activity. Ads that reach a certain threshold of “flags” will be automatically eliminated.
- Meeting regularly with Attorneys General to discuss additional ways to fight inappropriate content and improve the safety of the site.

A copy of the agreement is available on the Attorney General’s Web site, www.azag.gov. For additional information, contact Anne Hilby at (602) 542-8019.

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